

# Ten Post-Workout Snacks to Fuel Sports Recovery

By Kelly Springer, MS, RD, CDN

*Whether you're looking for stamina to run the bases, the energy to rule the field or the speed to win the 100-meter dash, including proper nutritional recovery from your workout is critical to remain on top of your game.*

## WHAT IS RECOVERY NUTRITION?

Exhaustive exercise can deplete your muscles' storage of fuel, leaving you running on empty. That's why after a hard workout, it's time to refuel! Recovery nutrition is a combination of the food and beverages that you consume immediately, or soon after, your exercise session has finished. This snack or mini-meal begins the process of replacing your fuel stores, so that you are ready to tackle your next activity. Recovery nutrition is especially important for athletes that have more than one event in the same day.

## WHAT SHOULD A RECOVERY MEAL LOOK LIKE?

There is no such thing as the perfect recovery food, but there are some nutrients that you definitely should include. The most important of those nutrients is carbohydrates. That's because carbohydrate rich foods provide the nutrition to restore glycogen stores. In addition to carbohydrate, the athlete's initial recovery snack or meal should include high-quality protein that contains all of the essential amino acids. This helps to stimulate muscle protein synthesis and minimize protein breakdown.<sup>(1)</sup>

There are lots of ways to get carbohydrates and protein in your recovery meal. Many dairy foods are a natural blend of both carbohydrates and protein. Research shows that the combination of carbohydrates and protein in milk, as well as the water content, may help to quickly restore your muscles.<sup>(2)</sup> And, dairy has vitamin D, calcium, magnesium, and phosphorus – all minerals that help you maintain strong bones, proper muscle functioning, and fluid balance. Vitamin D helps your body utilize these minerals more efficiently.

## QUICK AND EASY SNACK IDEAS TO FUEL SPORTS RECOVERY

You may be thinking it's impossible to prepare something within 45 minutes after a workout. Showering and changing easily takes 20-30 minutes, leaving you with as little as 15 minutes to eat. But, with a little planning, it's easier than you think. Listed on the right are 10 snack ideas to fuel your sports recovery.

<sup>1</sup> Thomas, DT, Erdman, KA, and Burke, LM. (2016). "Position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Dietitians of Canada, and the American College of Sports Medicine: Nutrition and Athletic Performance." *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*.

<sup>2</sup> Ferguson-Stegall, L., et al., "Postexercise Carbohydrate-Protein Supplementation improves Subsequent Exercise Performance and Intracellular Signaling for Protein Synthesis." *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research* 2011; 25 (5):1210-24. AND Lunn WR et al., "Chocolate Milk and Endurance Exercise Recovery: Protein balance, glycogen and performance." 2012; 44(4): 682-91

**10** Super Easy Post-Workout Snacks



- 1) 5 THIN SLICES CHEESE + 5-6 WHOLE GRAIN CRACKERS + SMALL BANANA
- 2) ½ CUP YOGURT + ¼ CUP MIXED DRIED FRUIT
- 3) ½ CUP COTTAGE CHEESE + ¼ CUP CHOPPED PINEAPPLE
- 4) ½ CUP GREEK YOGURT + ¼ CUP GRANOLA + ¼ CUP BERRY OF CHOICE
- 5) SMOOTHIE: ¼ CUP PLAIN GREEK YOGURT + ½ CUP SKIM MILK, +1 CHOPPED BANANA + ¾ CUP FROZEN BERRIES
- 6) ¾ CUP OF WHOLE GRAIN CEREAL + 1 CUP OF SKIM MILK + ½ SLICED BANANA
- 7) ¼ CUP OF SKIM RICOTTA CHEESE SPREAD + RICE CAKE + A SMALL DRIZZLE OF HONEY
- 8) FRUITY SKEWERS: ALTERNATE 6 SMALL PIECES OF 1 CHOPPED PART-SKIM MOZZARELLA STICK + 12 GRAPES
- 9) GRILLED APPLE AND CHEESE SANDWICH: WHOLE GRAIN BREAD + SLICED APPLE + LOW-FAT CHEESE
- 10) AND, THE EASIEST CHOICE OF ALL — CHOCOLATE MILK!

Perform your best with nutritional recovery!